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PROJECT REPORT - STS390 - RWANDA AND GENOCIDE

BRIEF: policy/position.

Addressing: UN Security Council

Hypothetical group: Human rights activist *Watching Human Rights Worldwide*.

This brief is addressing the United Nations Security Council focusing on the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The brief will concentrate on what occurred in Rwanda, the lessons to be learnt from the lack of intervention on behalf of the United Nations and international community, and what should be done if such acts of genocide do transpire in the future; essentially making sure the same mistake is not made again.

18th October 2007

ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

ISSUE: RWANDA AND GENOCIDE

OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE:

Genocide has occurred in various forms in more than an unacceptable number of countries throughout history¹, the genocide in Rwanda being a prime illustration. After the carnage and violence that took place in April 1994, it is clear and obvious that such inhumane acts have no place in today's world, and I am here to tell you on behalf of *Watching Human Rights Worldwide* it is the UN's task to learn from the mistakes made by the UN themselves and the international community in Rwanda to ensure such horror does not commence again.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Apart from the *United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* 1948², genocide does not have a solid/distinct definition and alternatively is quite ambiguous.³ However, the massacres that occurred in Rwanda

¹ Rubenstein, W (2004) 'Genocide and historical debate: William D. Rubenstein ascribes the bitterness of historians' arguments to the lack of an agreed definition and to political agendas, *History Today*, Vol 54, no. 4, pp36-38. Other examples of genocide include the Jewish Holocaust, slaughter of Armenians by the Turks in 1945, and can even be considered to have occurred with Indigenous Australians.

² Ibid. The Convention states 'genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: a) killing members of the group, b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. Several commonsense definitions of genocide fail to coincide with the UN definition – several of the UN's categories do not even involve killing.

³ Destexhe, A. (1995), *The Crime of Genocide, Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, New York University Press & Pluto Press/UK. See <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/rwanda/reports/dsetexhe.html>). Raphael Lemkin coined the term genocide, and according to Lemkin, genocide signifies "the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group' and implies the existence of a coordinated plan, aimed at total

clearly reflect the notion of genocide. ‘Genocide is a crime that, under international law, obliges certain responses from states and organisations with a commitment to human rights.’⁴

The genocide commenced in on the 6 April 1994⁵, where the Hutu dominated central government killed up to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 100 days, primarily using machetes, clubs and small arms.⁶ The aim, which was close to successful, was to wipe out the entire Rwandese Tutsi population.⁷ The pre-massacre population was estimated at seven million people with 85 % of Hutu to 15% Tutsi, subsequently 76% of the Tutsi population were killed in 100 days.⁸ In contrast to the Jewish genocide, the civilian Hutu population played an active role in the massacres – “For the first time in modern history, a state succeeded in transforming the mass of its population into murders.”⁹ All Rwandan people carried identification cards indicating their ethnic

extermination, to be put into effect against individuals chosen as victims purely, simply and exclusively because they are members of the target group”. Speech by Dr Sev Ozchowski OAM, Australian Human Rights Commissioner, ‘11th Anniversary of Rwandan Genocide Memorial’, Sydney 30 April 2005, Available: http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/speeches/human_rights/rwandan.htm.

A definition of genocide: ‘organised killing of a people for the express purpose of putting an end to their collective existence.’ Three general things about genocide – ‘information regarding the occurrence of the genocide will be available to the nations of the wider world, while it is still being carried out, invariably little/nothing will be done at the time of the genocide by exterior nations or bodies to halt the genocide, and genocide is often about politics, or more particularly about political power and dominance.’ This appears to have been the case in Rwanda.

⁴ de Waal, A & Omaar, R (1995) ‘The Genocide in Rwanda and the International response’, *Current History*, vol 94, no.591, p157.

⁵ United Human Rights Council, ‘Genocide in Rwanda’, See www.unitedhumanrights.org/Genocide/genocide_in_rwanda.htm

On April 6 1994 the Rwandan President was killed in an airplane crash, and almost immediately after Rwanda fell into political violence.

⁶ Jones, A (2006), *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Routledge, London & New York, p 232.

⁷ de Wall & Omaar, *op cit*, p156.

⁸ Speech by Dr Sev Ozchowski, *op cit*.

⁹ Jones, *op cit* p.232. Killers were not restricted to Hutu extremists, professionals such as journalists, doctors and educators also took part, along with Hutu youths and peasants. Not only were Hutus were also forced to kill their Tutsi neighbours or face death sentences, Tutsis were also forced to kill members of their own families. Hundreds of thousands of Hutus participated in eagerly in the killings, where the involvement of the civilian population empowered peasants

background, and these ‘tribal cards’ now spelt out ‘the difference between life and death.’¹⁰ The Rwandan media, controlled by Hutu extremists, played an influential role in the genocide, by further encouraging the killings through the broadcast of continuous hate propaganda, inciting racial detestation, and exposing hiding spots of Tutsis.¹¹ Churches and missions compounds became some of the worst places for the massacres.¹² One massacre of the Rwanda genocide may stand as the ‘most concentrated ground level slaughter of the twentieth century.’¹³

KEY ISSUES:

How could the UN sit back and watch this tale of horror and human cost unfold before the international community? Was it not obvious that intervention was essential and effectively it was your position to do something?¹⁴ All you can do now is apologise for the inadequacy of your body¹⁵, however you also need to make sure in the future, the UN undertakes its role seriously, and to its paramount capacity.

through stealing — ‘Many were motivated by greed – the chance to loot Tutsi belongings and seize Tutsi land. And for those at the bottom of the social ladder, there was the unprecedented opportunity to exercise life and death over others’ (p243).

¹⁰ United Human Rights Council, *op cit*.

¹¹ de Wall and Omaar, *op cit*, p156.

¹² United Human Rights Council, *op cit*. In Mushya, 1200 Tutsis were killed from 8 am until the evening. Hospitals, schools and stadiums were also a primary place for massacres.

¹³ Jones, *op cit*, p 239. ‘On April 20, at the parish of Kamara in Butare prefecture, “between thirty-five and forty-three thousand people died in less than six hours.” This is more than those that were killed in the massacres conducted by Nazis in WWII.’

¹⁴ Ibid. On April 10 the UN made contact with military observers in Gisenyi, the hub of Hutu extremism, where observers described “total chaos” with “massacres everywhere” leaving tens of thousands of Tutsi corpses. Thus the ‘UN and international community were fully aware, within a few days of the killing of the President, that killing on a genocide scale was taking place in Rwanda.’

¹⁵ Ibid 233. An apology has been made. “In March 2004, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan offered a qualified apology for member states’ unwillingness to confront the Rwandan catastrophe. “The international community has failed Rwanda, and that must leave us always with a sense of bitter regret and abiding sorrow.”

The UN was aware of the imminent genocide.¹⁶ The outside world, international governments¹⁷, and your body, the UN had full and informed knowledge of the horror unfolding in Rwanda, even 48 hours after its commencement.¹⁸ Ignorantly, both the UN¹⁹ and the US would not acknowledge the genocide that was occurring in Rwanda, preferring to label it anything but genocide²⁰, ‘which would have necessitated an emergency intervention of some form.’²¹ U.N. peacekeepers were present in Rwanda at the commencement of the genocide, however as conditions worsened in Rwanda, the UN’s response was anything but active – the Security Council voted unanimously to abandon the country, removing the remaining peacekeeping troops and leaving only 200

¹⁶ Ibid 232. Numerous warnings of impending genocide had been transmitted, and an armed United Nations “assistance mission” (UNAMIR) under the command of Canadian Major-General Romeo Dallaire had been in Kigali since October 1993.’

¹⁷ Colgan, A (2006) ‘A Tale of Two Genocides: The Failed US Responses to Rwanda and Darfur’, *Peacework*, vol33, no.369, p16. ‘Just after the President’s plane was shot down, the Clinton Administration was fully briefed on the ‘unfolding crisis’ however made no effort to interfere and instead proceeded to push for the withdrawal of UN forces in Rwanda. As the genocide began to unfold, information and intelligence was continually received exposing the extreme human cost that was occurring. Consequently, the US made an informed decision not to act to stop the genocide.’ ‘Senior US officials later expressed regret, and acknowledged that this crime against humanity should have invoked a more urgent and active response.’ ‘There exists a great deal of evidence to suggest that detailed information on the scope of the genocide was indeed available to the US – both before and during the massacres in Rwanda.’

¹⁸ Speech by Dr Sev Ozchowski, *op cit*. After 48 hours, French and Belgium troops evacuated “all foreign nationals” from the capital of Kigali.¹⁸ The impact of this was immediate, as the former school used as a base was abandoned, militia and the Presidential Guard killed all the remaining Tutsis and moderate Hutus.¹⁸ Ambassador David Rawson of the US remained in Kigali for 10 days after the evacuation. Clearly information could have been dispensed to the outside world. The lack of public activism on part of the international community played a major role in deterring the UN and international governments from acting – ‘as far as the US officials in the Clinton Administration were concerned, there was no political cost to inaction against genocide, as opposed to a potentially steep political cost to US embroilment in yet another violent African quagmire.’¹⁸

¹⁹ Ibid. General Kofi Annan, Assistant Secretary-General for the UN peacekeeping operations was ‘unable to act decisively, despite prior warning from Romeo Dallaire – Canadian General commanding forces on the ground in Rwanda.

²⁰ Jones, *op cit*, p239 Security Council members, particularly France and the US, both cautioned and ridiculed the use of the word genocide to describe what was going on.

²¹ United Human Rights Council, *op cit*.

soldiers for the entire country.²² What benefit would such a small number to minimise the large scale mass killings?

The UN's lack of commitment and intervention to the Rwandan genocide was complemented with the fact the media also made a dismal effort to portray the atrocities in Rwanda to the outside world.²³ Essentially, no choice was provided by the media as to how to understand or interpret the issue. While we as an organisation know the UN is not totally to blame for the continuation and free reign of the Hutu militia, it appears no one else in the international community acted because the UN failed to. In wake of the Rwandan genocide, the international community, and UN attained severe but seemingly deserved condemnation for their inaction. France, Belgium, and the US²⁴ failed to impede or stop the massacres that were quite obviously occurring.²⁵ Only minimal efforts were made by the international community to protect targets of genocide or to punish the main perpetrators.²⁶

²² Ibid. Jones, *op cit*, p232. On April 21, the Security Council voted to withdraw all around 200 of the 2500 strong UNAMIR contingent.²²

²³ Jones, *op cit*, p399. 'The withdrawal of nearly all media and most foreign observers from Rwanda in the early stages of the genocide meant that only the most fragmentary imagery and testimony of that holocaust reached the outside world.' This clearly would explain why there was no public activism or voice on the issue of whether genocide was occurring or not.

²⁴ Speech by Dr Sev Ozchowski, *op cit*. Impact of the UN convention – signatories to the UN Convention are required to condemn genocidal slaughter and stop it, however despite being a signatory to the Convention, the US failed to stop, prevent or do anything.

²⁵ Jones, *op cit*, p239. After ten Belgium soldiers were captured by Hutus and murdered, the United States, France, Belgium and Italy began evacuating their personnel from Rwanda. Yet in nothing that reflected signs of humanity, no attempt was made to help the Tutsis or Hutu moderates trying to run from the violence of the Hutu militia.

²⁶ Falk, R (2000), *Human Rights Horizons: The Pursuit of Justice in a Globalising World*, Routledge, Great Britain, p 180. Gahima, G (2007), 'Accountability for Atrocity: Lessons from Rwanda', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, vol8, no.2, p107 – Efforts have been made to trial genocide offenders through mechanisms as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, national trials and in *gacca* courts but have all operated with criticism and limited effectiveness.

The UN failed at the Security Council and operationally. Why did it take so long to deploy troops? There was a large, unnecessary and unexplained delay – UN troop deployment by the Security Council occurred on April 29; however it was only approved on June 9, hence taking five weeks for consent.²⁷ It was not until it was too late the UN finally decided to act.²⁸ ‘Confronted with international television reports clearly portraying genocide, the UN Security Council voted to send up to 5000 soldiers to Rwanda.’²⁹ However, their deployment never came in time to stop the massacres.³⁰

RECOMMENDATIONS

In March 1994, 10 years after the slaughter, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked, “Are we confident that, confronted by a new Rwanda today, we can respond effectively, in good time?” His answer was: ‘We can by no means be certain we would’.³¹ Why can a definite answer not be provided? An answer for this question needs to be established that is concrete and derivative of the Convention itself, otherwise the effectiveness and purpose of the Convention and the UN’s authority is useless. The lesson to be learnt from Rwanda is quite simple and necessary, the UN and international community need

²⁷ Speech by Dr Sev Ozchowski, *op cit*. The effect of the delay was heavily felt, with a subsequently estimated 10 000 dying per day, results in a hefty loss of live at the hands of the UN’s slow actions.

²⁸ Jones, *op cit*, p244. On June 21, French troops were sent into Rwanda under the authority of the UN Security Council. On July 4, The RPF gained full control of Kilgali, and the next day France with UN approval created a “safe zone” in the south-west. French intervention saved thousands of Tutsis lives, however it also allowed the evacuation of almost 2 million Hutus to refugee camps in Zaire, with an overwhelming amount perpetrators of the killings. International media gained access to the camps, which were suffering from severe humanitarian crisis (diseases and hygiene). Unlike the genocide, this was apparently ‘something the international community could address with minimal risk’, and the US government, who had avoided acknowledging anything near a genocidal scale in Rwanda, jumped to provide aid – within a few days US troops begin distributing water and medical aid to the camps.

²⁹ United Human Rights Council, *op cit*.

³⁰ Jones, *op cit*, p233.

³¹ Speech by Annan, K, Memorial Conference on Rwanda Genocide – United Nations Press Release, New York, March 2004, Available:

<http://www.un.org/news/press/docs/2004/sqsm9223.doc.htm>

to fulfil their role completely and appropriately, it does not matter if Rwanda was too little or too remote³², the human cost of inaction far outweighs political influence³³, humanitarian rights should be given priority. Clearly a significant difference exists between theory, namely the UN Convention, where in this case its power and influence is limited, and the practice and implementation of the terms of the Convention on real genocide situations. Therefore, a possible solution is to address the inadequacies of the definition – establish a more concrete characterisation of genocide.³⁴ The UN needs to act when knowledge of the situation arises, and intervene when conflict first commences. While international conventions exist prohibiting genocide and that they possess the ability to enforce that sanction, in reflection on the Rwanda genocide this is clearly not a sufficient reaction to the issue of genocide.³⁵ ‘Even when the supervising body/force does intervene, they must eventually depart, and the opposing parties need to deal with each other’.³⁶ Regardless, no intervention at all will have greater disadvantage.

With the continuing genocide in Darfur, it is clear lessons have not been learnt from Rwanda³⁷, by the international community or the UN. The UN may need to utilise the

³² Ibid. ‘Rwanda was simply too remote, too far, too poor, too little, and probably too black to be worthwhile.’

³³ de Wall and Omaar p 161 – “It is essential to learn the lessons of the international debacle of the response to Rwanda. This does not mean a standard evaluation of the efficiency of relief response, with recommendations for improving coordination, rapid response and the like, but a thorough examination of the entire principles on which responses to political emergencies are mounted.”

³⁴ Jones, *op cit*, p 367. ‘Many have criticised the UN Genocide Convention’s exclusion of political and other potential victim groups. Furthermore, the four core groups that the convention does recognise ‘national, ethnical, racial and religious’ are notoriously difficult to define.’

³⁵ Speech by Dr Sev Ozchowski, *op cit*.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Colgan, *op cit*, p17.

resources and power of international heads to assist in enforcing human rights.³⁸

Genocide should not occur in today's world, it is now time to do something about it.

³⁸ Ibid. 'The US is the most powerful country in the world, with an unmatched capacity to respond to crises and to mobilise the broader international community's response. If the US were to do everything it could to stop the genocide, it is likely that it would succeed.'